

STAG RIG TIBETAN VILLAGE: HAIR CHANGING
AND MARRIAGE

'brug mo skyid (Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学)
with Charles Kevin Stuart (Shaanxi Normal University 陕西
师范大学), Alexandru Anton-Luca (Independent Scholar),
and Steve Frediani (Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

Marriage in Stag rig Village, Shar lung Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province,¹ China is described in the context of the hair dressing ritual, rules of exclusion and inclusion, the process of marriage (spouse selection, free choice marriage, arranged marriage), engagement, drinking contract liquor, bride wealth discussion, choosing a date for the wedding ritual, wedding preparations at the bride and groom's homes, the wedding ritual and banquet, marrying a groom into the bride's home, divorce, and the atmosphere surrounding the bride's arrival.

KEY WORDS

Marriage, Tibetan, wedding, hair-changing, Amdo, Mtsho sngon, Qinghai, China

¹ Douhoulou 豆后漏/ Dourou 豆肉 Village, Donggou 东沟 Township, Guide 贵德 County, Hainan 海南 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province.

PART ONE: ACCOUNTS

Account One ('brug mo skyid)²

I had seven days of holiday beginning 1 May 2004 so I left Mtsho sngon Normal University in Zi ling (Xining 西宁) City, where I was a student, and returned to my home in Stag rig Village, where I interviewed a family of five people—Uncle Khro rgyal and Aunt Pad ma; their son, Tshe 'bum; daughter-in-law, Bad skyid; and their five-year-old grandson, Phun mo.

When I got off the bus, I saw Uncle Khro rgyal and Phun mo sitting on the stairs in front of the village medical clinic. When they saw me, Phun mo ran over and kissed me in greeting. Uncle Khro rgyal stood, came over, and said, "'brug mo, are you home for the holiday?"

"Yes. What are you doing here?" I replied.

"Phun mo has a cold. We're waiting for the doctor to give him an injection," Uncle Khro rgyal said.

I then said goodbye and hurried home, for I had not seen my parents in more than two months.

After I had eaten something, I went to Uncle Khro rgyal's home, which is near my own home. When I got to their gate, I called, "Uncle Khro rgyal! Uncle Khro rgyal!"

Aunt Pad ma eventually came out, invited me to come inside, and offered me tea and fried bread. "I was washing chives in the kitchen, so I didn't hear you at first," she said, explaining why it had taken her some time to come to the gate.

"I saw Uncle Khro rgyal and Phun mo at the medical clinic, but where are Brother Tshe 'bum and Sister Bad 'skyid?" I asked, when I didn't see anyone else in the home.

² B. 1983.

Aunt Pad ma put the chives outside in the afternoon sunshine and said, "Son is always busy in the millhouse, especially at this time, when every family has to mill flour for the summer." She sighed and continued, "He needs somebody to lend him a hand, but look at my husband and me—one is eighty and one is seventy-five—plus Khro rgyal caught a serious cold this spring and nearly died. Bad skyid is never at home. This morning she said she was going to help Brtan ba's family build walls."

She offered me more tea and was silent. The sun shone on her wrinkled face. I saw deep sadness in her gray eyes.

A dog barked and somebody pushed open the gate. It was Aunt Pad ma's eldest daughter, Bsod nams. "I've come to give you this meat. It is fresh. Make some soup for yourself and Father," she said and handed the meat to her mother. Aunt Pad ma put the meat in the kitchen. Bsod nams looked in the kitchen and asked, "*Mna' ma ma yong ne*? Didn't she come?"

"*Ma yong*. No," said Aunt Pad ma.

Bsod nams said, "Oh, she said she had to go help you with the sheep and dinner. She didn't even have lunch."

"You went there?" asked Aunt Pad ma.

"Yeah. That was a long time ago. The walls were finished at about two o'clock," Bsod nams said.

After a long silence, Aunt Pad ma sighed, but said nothing.

The sound of the gate being pushed open came again. Uncle Khro rgyal entered. Bsod nams stood, gave her seat to her father, and offered him a bowl of tea.

"Phun mo?" asked Aunt Pad ma.

"Playing outside with the kids," replied Uncle Khro rgyal.

"What did the doctor say?" Aunt Pad ma asked.

"No need for more injections, but he needs to take medicine for three days," he said after a sip of tea.

Bsod nams said, "I have never seen a family like yours that spends so much money on doctors, even for a cough. Look at you two—not even daring to buy a half-kilo of meat. You are too old to do heavy housework. People your age should only chant and prepare for the next life."

Then she covered her face in her hands. Her shoulders were heaving. Her mother moved next to her, and patted her, "No crying. This is our fate. At the beginning, we thought this girl was an ideal daughter-in-law... But who knows? Everyone changes as time goes by. It doesn't matter that we have to work. However, what we are really worried about is Tshe 'bum. He needs a good wife and a happy home."

Bsod nams stopped sobbing and said, "Divorce her. Tshe 'bum is still young. He has time to take another wife."

Her father looked up and said, "It is easy to say, but where is the money? These days a divorce is much more expensive than a wedding. She has been in this family for ten years. Plus there is her son. We would have to pay at least 20,000 RMB. For a wealthy family, maybe that's not a problem, but we only have a mill machine to earn a little money from our fields. It's difficult."

The sun had nearly set. The three finished talking. Bsod nams left for her home. Uncle Khro rgyal went to bring in the sheep. Aunt Pad ma chopped chives and got ready to make dinner. I stood and planned to leave, but Aunt Pad ma invited me to have dinner with them. I accepted her invitation, because I wanted to learn more.

The sun had completely set. Tshe 'bum and Bad skyid were still absent. After Uncle Khro rgyal finished feeding the sheep and putting them in the sheepfold, he sat

on the *hu tse*,³ murmuring chants. I helped Aunt Pad ma make fried pancakes stuffed with chives.

Phun mo sat near the stove, humming a child's song he had learnt at school. He looked in the pan hungrily. I finished making the pancakes and asked, "Phun mo, when you are a young man, what kind of girl do you want to marry?"

He looked at me, thought for a moment, and said, "I want a very beautiful and kind wife. I don't want a strong girl for my wife. Strong girls beat weak boys."

This reminded me that his mother was stronger than his father. I had heard from my family that Bad skyid had beaten Tshe 'bum several times, but I couldn't ask the family; it would have only increased the pain in their hearts.

As we started to have dinner, Bad skyid came in. She said nothing to her parents-in-law. "Are you on holiday?" she asked me.

"Yes," I said and though I was not a member of the family, I did not want to talk to her anymore. I'm not sure why.

She turned to her son and asked, "Did you go see the doctor? What did he say?"

The little boy climbed up to his mother's lap and explained that his grandfather had taken him to the doctor who had said that it wasn't a very serious problem.

Aunt Pad ma got a cup for Bad skyid and offered her tea.

Bad skyid spoke to them for the first time, "This morning my sister told me my mother was sick so I went to see her."

"Oh, is she better now?" said Aunt Pad ma.

"Yeah, she got an injection this afternoon," said

³ Literary Tibetan: *phul tse*. A heated platform used for sitting and sleeping.

Bad skyid.

Uncle Khro rgyal looked at Aunt Pad ma, then at Bad skyid, and said, "I didn't see her in the clinic."

"Maybe she left before you arrived," suggested Bad skyid.

The sky was completely dark. At last, Tshe 'bum came in with two buckets of drinking water and greeted his parents and me. He was white with flour from head to foot. He washed quickly and sat next to his mother. Aunt Pad ma poured him a cup of tea and offered him some fried pancakes. The room was quiet, except for occasional questions to me about school. Everybody lowered their heads and ate.

After finishing, I thanked them for dinner and left for home. Aunt Pad ma saw me off. At the gate, she said, "You know my family, and you saw everything today. 'brug mo, girl, it is important to find a good spouse, for both the man and woman."

I nodded my head in reply and left. I didn't know what to say to comfort her, as I was inexperienced in such matters. I hoped they would find a good solution.

I slept until ten-thirty the following morning. After a quick breakfast, I went to visit their home again. I only saw Uncle Khro rgyal and Aunt Pad ma at home. Bad skyid had gone to help build a sheepfold at her uncle's home. Tshe 'bum had gone to the millhouse as usual. Aunt Pad ma was hitting her back with a ladle. She said, "My pain is getting worse these days. Nothing can stop it."

When I suggested acupuncture she said, "Useless. It will go with me until I die, just like my work goes with me."

Uncle Khro rgyal sat in the sun with closed eyes. I didn't want to disturb him because he looked very old and tired. Deep wrinkles creased his face and hands.

A new day had begun, repeating itself for this family. No laughter. Much sadness. I said goodbye.

Account Two ('brug mo skyid)

Tshe dbang is one of my closest childhood friends. She married when she was fourteen. Her parents and uncles arranged the marriage. She didn't love her husband, but she was pressured to marry him because she had two younger sisters living at home and her mother had to care for them. Her brother was also planning to marry a girl from the same village where they lived and Tshe dbang's bridewealth was used as the bridewealth for her brother's bride.

She worked like a dog in her husband's home for two years after the wedding. Her husband often beat her when he was drunk. Her mother-in-law treated her like a slave. In the third year of her marriage, she divorced. I was very glad to hear of the end of her marriage, because she had finally escaped from a hopeless, unhappy marriage.

After I got older, I began thinking about my own life. I have many ideas and wishes about my marriage. In the village where I live, many girls about my age are married and have children. Some are divorced. I am not married yet because I am a college student. However, my parents sometimes talk to me about my marriage and whom they think would be a good spouse for me. This makes me think about my future husband and family.

I am the youngest child in my family and the only unmarried one. According to tradition, if the youngest child in a family is a girl, then the parents let her choose her husband. If the boy's background is good, her family supports the marriage. I hope my parents won't arrange my marriage and choose a husband for me. I like the idea of a romantic marriage and hope my eventual marriage will be stronger if it is based on love. I also hope that my father, brothers, and uncles won't ask for excessive bridewealth. If it is too high, then a family with little income goes into debt

by taking a wife for their son. After marriage, the bride works as a member of the boy's family and if the family is in debt because of the bridewealth, the bride must work harder.

I want to marry an educated man. If I marry a farmer or a herdsman with no education, then villagers will think I have physical or mental problems. Besides, I think we wouldn't share the same ideas about life.

Even though I am still young to marry, in fact it is approaching. I hope my marriage will be my own to decide and free of pressure.

Account Three⁴

My mother was an only child. She began living with her grandfather when she was eight years old. When she became older this responsibility prevented her from marrying out, even though many young men proposed to her.

My father is the oldest child in his family. He has two sisters and three brothers and it would have overburdened the family if he had brought a bride to his parents' home. His father died when he was thirteen. My father then had to help his mother do housework and rear his younger sisters and brothers.

My great-grandfather introduced the two and, in 1960, when Father was thirty-two, he married and moved

⁴ A local Tibetan woman (b. 1983) describes her parents' marriage. As this account indicates, significant age differences between spouses were common in the past, with men being older. In 2005, however, most spouses are about the same age. Men often married into their wives' homes in the past but currently, this is rare.

into Mother's home. Mother was twenty. For Mother, Father seemed like an older brother at the time they began living together with my mother's grandfather. Father earned money by making Tibetan-style leather boots for villagers, monks, and herdsmen. Mother worked in the village's communal fields.

My oldest brother was born in the fifth year of their marriage, which changed the family. Father and Mother still worked for the family. Then, one after another, five more children were born. In the year of my birth, due to land allocation in 1982, my family received thirteen *mu* 亩⁵ of arable fields. Father also bought sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, and horses, and our house was also rebuilt.

Two of my elder brothers were enrolled in schools. My two elder sisters had married. My third elder brother herded the family livestock. Except for spring and autumn, Mother worked in the fields and did housework. Father continued making boots day and night. Sometimes, even in cold winter, he worked very late under an oil-lamp light.

I cannot recall any serious arguments between my parents. However, very minor conflicts are common. Father is the kind of man who easily becomes angry when someone does something he doesn't like, and Mother likes to joke with him. Like most Tibetan women, Mother is very respectful of Father. I never saw her oppose Father or say something bad about him. Sometimes I ask her, "Why don't you get angry when Father scolds you?"

She always answers, "That's his personality. It's hard for a man to change."

Neither of my parents attended school. Although they cannot read and write, they chant and recite prayers. In my village, my family is the only one with three educated people—my two brothers and me. My parents have

⁵ One *mu* equals 0.16 acres/ 0.067 hectares.

therefore become the most admired old couple in my village. Their hope is to rear us to be good people.

Account Four

I am a thirty-five year old man and a government officer. I am always thankful that I have the kindest parents and siblings in the world. I also have many sincere friends. However, marriage has been a big demon in my life. Marriage has changed my way of life, personality, and confidence. I now feel sick of living in this world.

I was admired by my peers when I was a teenager and received much praise from parents and other people because I always obtained high marks in school, could dance and sing very well, and my jokes would make people laugh until their bellies ached. I thought I was the luckiest person in the world. This lasted until I was twenty years old when I graduated from normal school and was employed as a Chinese-Tibetan translator.

When my uncle was close to death, my parents told me that I was to be engaged to my cousin whom my uncle had adopted. I felt like I had been hit by a lightning bolt. I then understood why my father and brother opposed the relationship I had had with a girlfriend while I was in school. I didn't like the engagement, but I said nothing. What could I say? It was my uncle's decision.

I married my cousin when I was twenty-one. She is three years older than me, and I lived in her home with her mother. They didn't treat me as I had expected, although I gave all my salary to them to show my good faith, and I did all the housework. I even washed dirty clothes. It is a big disgrace for a Tibetan man to wash his wife's clothes, especially her socks. At that time I didn't think much about it. I just thought that was the only way to be a good

husband and a good son-in-law.

However, I was wrong, completely wrong. Their maltreatment steadily worsened. Sometimes they didn't even allow me to enter the home. One night it snowed heavily. I came back from work for my son's birthday. When I reached the gate, I found the gate firmly bolted from the inside. No matter how much I knocked and shouted, nobody came to open the door. That night I slept in the shed where we stored straw. I couldn't enter my wife's home, because they wouldn't let me. I couldn't go to my parents' house, because I didn't want them to be sad over my unfortunate situation.

I led such a life until my son was three years old. Then I divorced. Before that, however, I first told my parents and siblings about my life during those four years. My wife was present and she didn't deny it. She just asked for my son. I gave him to her, not because I didn't love him, but because I know that a baby cannot live without his own mother. My parents and siblings cried for me all night long. I told them how my nightmares were now over, and that was the end of my first marriage.

Not long after that, I changed my job as an officer and moved to the Garang Township center. During the holidays, I stayed with my parents and had many happy times with them. Sometimes I would go see my son, but not in my ex-wife's home. We rarely talked to each other when we met.

When I was twenty-six, I met my second wife. Her home is in the township where I work, and she is a primary school teacher. Because she didn't attend the teacher training (normal) school, she received a very low salary at that time, even though she worked as hard as others. We fell in love as soon as we met. Our parents expressed no opinion about our marriage

I soon discovered that she could not do much

housework and she could not cook well. I accepted that, because I understood that not all women can do housework and cook well. I did all the housework. She thanked me all the time and said that she was very lucky to have a husband like me. Soon afterwards we had our baby—a lovely son. The three of us had a very happy life for seven months. Then she said that she wanted to study at Mtsho lho Prefecture Normal School. I didn't say anything and paid her tuition. I was too busy to look after my son so I sent him to my parents' home and they cared for him until he was seven years old.

My second wife studied in the normal school for four years. When I visited her she said, "Don't let my classmates know that we are a couple because I am the only one who is married." I understood and agreed.

After graduation, she got a better teaching job and her salary increased. However, she had changed. Many nights she didn't come home. Instead, she slept at the school. People said she often walked around with a young man. I didn't believe those rumors until one day she told me that she didn't love me anymore. I was shocked a second time and my second marriage ended.

She took my second son with her, but she said I could take him to my parents during the holidays as they had raised him. After these two marriages, I completely changed. I smoked and drank everyday, and used all my money to gamble. I shouted at my parents as if they were the cause of my failed marriages. Sometimes, I even thought about ending my life to escape my horrible memories.

My parents, brothers, sisters, and friends all encouraged me and helped me to wake up from those nightmares. In time I awakened, but even now I still don't understand why my marriages failed. I feel very sad when I see my two sons, because they are the victims of

unfortunate marriages and I cannot provide them with a happy home. One thing that I am very sure is that I will never marry again, because not all women are 'gentle lambs'.⁶

Account Five⁷

I don't think I am lucky. Since I was born many unhappy things have happened around me and to my family—especially when I was three years old. My father died very suddenly from a heart attack one autumn day that year. A thorn pierced my mother's left eye seven days after his funeral and she soon became blind in that eye. Another unpleasant event happened a few months after those tragedies—my eldest brother caught a very bad cold that became progressively worse. Mother spent all our money trying to cure him, but the King of Demons⁸ took away his voice and he became deaf.

There was a rumor that my father's ghost still wandered on earth and that sometimes he visited his wife and children. The villagers began to avoid every member of my family. They were even afraid to touch me—a small child. Our lives were very difficult. My second brother, who was

⁶ *Wenroude yanggao* 温柔的羊羔 is a Chinese saying commonly used by local Tibetans that describes gentle women.

⁷ A twice-married, twenty-nine year old local woman (b. 1973) describes her marriages. The father-in-law in this account divorced his wife and now lives alone in a county seat town.

⁸ Villagers believe that Gshin rje bdag po 'the King of Demons' punishes people who did evil things in their previous lives.

only nine years old, did the work of a grown man in order to earn money. My eldest brother herded livestock for other families as a servant, and my sister helped my mother do housework and look after me.

I was engaged to a young man in my village when I was fifteen. We were married three months later. It was a very good family. My father-in-law was a government officer and had a high salary. My mother-in-law and my husband were very kind to me, which almost made me forget my unhappy childhood. I was very thankful to them and I worked very hard.

However, something happened one rainy night that turned my life upside down. My husband was out with some of his friends. Only my parents-in-law and I were at home. I went to bed early after dinner because I was pregnant and not feeling well. At about midnight, somebody suddenly opened the door of my room. I thought it was my husband at first, but when the dark shadow came nearer, I realized it was my father-in-law. I was very surprised and called out, "Father, what are you..." but before I could finish, he covered my mouth with his big hand and pressed me down with his huge heavy body.

Then, the door suddenly opened. It was my husband. I was paralyzed with fear and stood up speechless. His face turned dark blue with rage. My mother-in-law appeared a minute later. They stared at us in disgust and disappointment. Slowly my father-in-law left the room. They just stared at me with cold, beast-like eyes no matter how I pleaded and explained.

As I expected, they called all our relatives the next morning. I felt guilty with my relatives present, because as my mother-in-law and husband scolded me, they also scolded my relatives for having such a disgraceful daughter and niece. At the end of the discussion it was decided that I was to leave their home immediately, and rear the baby

that was inside me by myself.

I don't remember how I spent the following days. The favorite topic of the villagers' conversations was my father-in-law and me. The scandal spread like the wind through the neighboring villages. I couldn't eat, drink, or sleep. I also didn't have the courage to meet people, even if they were young children. I stayed at home all day without speaking to anybody and I became steadily weaker. All my relatives and friends believed me and comforted me, but my baby was the only encouragement for me to live on. When I gave birth, my baby girl looked just like her father, with dark skin and thick, black eyebrows.

Although my baby's birth brought great happiness to my life, she couldn't change my life, and I couldn't stay at home. My brothers and sister hadn't married, and we were all living with my mother under one roof. Conflicts grew among us. By the time my little girl was five years old, my family members, and especially my sister, had begun expressing resentment; they shouted and sometimes even beat her. Every shout and blow was just like a stab to my heart. I know why they shouted at her and beat her, and I could do nothing to help her.

Finally, I decided to marry a man with a strong body odor.⁹ I had no other choice, though through this marriage my own body started to smell foul. He is an alcoholic gambler and often stays out all night. However, I have no right to complain, because of the big black spot on my past.

⁹ Villagers believe that *gseb ri* 'strong body odor' is inherited and those with *gseb ri* have more difficulty marrying than those without it.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Stag rig Village, Shar lung Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, China is described in the context of the hair dressing ritual, rules of exclusion and inclusion, the process of marriage (spouse selection, free choice marriage, arranged marriage), engagement, drinking contract liquor, bride wealth discussion, choosing a date for the wedding ritual, wedding preparations at the bride and groom's homes, the wedding ritual and banquet, marrying a groom into the bride's home, divorce, and the atmosphere surrounding the bride's arrival. In addition, several personal accounts contribute to the study.¹⁰

Stag rig Village, Shar lung Township, Khri ka County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is located in the east of Mtsho sngon Province. Sixty-five percent of Mtsho lho's population is Tibetan. The remaining population consists primarily of Han 汉 Chinese, Mongolian, Monguor (Tu 土), Hui 回, and Salar (Sala 撒拉). Tibetans and Han are the predominant ethnicities in Khri ka County, one of Mtsho lho's five counties.¹¹ Most residents of Shar lung, Phrang mar (Changmu 常牧), Ka ring (Garang 尕让), Kab ron (Xinjie 新街), and Lha khang thang (Luohantang 罗汉堂) townships

¹⁰ This article joins other, related studies written by former students of the English Training Program, Qinghai Nationalities Teacher's College, Qinghai Normal University, located in Xining City, Qinghai Province—Luo's [Blo bzang tshe ring] study (2010) of a hair changing ritual in a Tibetan village in the Bla brang area, Tshe dpal dro rje et al. (2010), Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart (2008), Tsering Bum et al. 2008, and Tshe dbang et al. (2010).

¹¹ Chab cha [Gonghe 共和], Mang rdzong [Guinan 贵南], Dar mtsho [Xinghai 兴海], Thun te [Tongde 同德], and Khri ka).

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are Tibetan. In contrast, the population of Heyin 河阴, Hedong 河东, and Hexi 河西 townships is primarily Han.

In 2002, the population of Mtsho sngon Province was 5.3 million, of which approximately fifty-four percent was Han Chinese, twenty-two percent was Tibetan, sixteen percent was Hui, four percent was Monguor, two percent was Salar, and two percent was Mongolian (Qinghai sheng tongji ju 2003, 60). In 2001, the population of Mtsho lho was 389,274 of which 31.8 percent lived in Chab cha County, 12.4 percent lived in Thun te County, 24.2 percent lived in Khri ka County, 14.8 percent lived in Xinghai 兴海 County, and 16.8 percent lived in Mang rdzong County (Qinghai sheng tongji ju 2002, 52).

In 2005, Stag rig Village consisted of 164 households (910 residents), all of whom were Tibetan. Stag rig Village had three *dui* 'divisions'. The First and Second divisions (Yi dui 一队 and Er dui 二队) are east of the Chu bar ma 'Middle River' (a Yellow River tributary), and Third Division (San dui 三队) is west of the river. These divisions were created in 1957 during the time of collective ownership. Each section consisted of more than fifty households. The Chinese names for the divisions were used by villagers, not the Tibetan terms. When such village corvée labor as building and maintaining roads was required, each division independently completed tasks assigned by the village leader.

Traditionally, Stag rig Village is said to consist of fifteen different clans as shown in Figure One.

Figure One. Stag rig Village Clans

Clan Name	Detail
Nags tshang	Clan ancestors came from Gcan tsha (Jianzha 尖扎) County in the modern-day Rma lho (Huangnan 黄南) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. ¹²
Phyor tshang	<i>Phyor</i> 'to wear expensive clothes and ornaments'; historically the richest clan in Stag rig Village.
Grwa tsa tshang	
Rnye tshang	Named after the first Rnye Lama of nearby Rnye Monastery who belonged to this clan
Ge lu tshang	
Re tshang	
Dpon tshang	Literally: leader's house/ family.
Bod dar tshang	
Nag phrug tshang	It has more than thirty households.
Stag rig tshang	The village's eponymous clan is said to have been the first clan to settle in the area
Rgyal bo tshang	Literally: king's house/ family.
Rgyal mo tshang	Literally: queen's house/ family. It has a single household.
This ba tshang	
Ru sar tshang	
Sha rgya lcin tshang	It has more than thirty households.

Rituals, festivities, and ceremonies were jointly observed by clan members. Examples of this included: yearly

¹² Qinghai sheng tongji ju (2003, 60).

sacrifices to mountain deities; weddings; funerals and mourning rituals. Any man in the clan may act as the all-important *A zhang* 'maternal uncle' (the man/ men escorting the bride to the groom's home) of a bride from the clan when she gets married.

Parents sent school age children to the village primary school since its founding in 1952. In 2005, thirty percent of school-age children did not attend school because their families could not pay the school fees.¹³ Other families wished to keep children at home to herd livestock and other activities to benefit the family. After finishing Grade Three at the village primary school, approximately fifty percent of the students enrolled at the Shar lung Township Boarding School, located eight kilometers from the village.¹⁴ After graduation, only a few children continued in such middle schools as Mtsho lho Prefecture Normal School in Chab cha.

Each year, about five village boys become monks at Rnye and This ba monasteries, situated half a kilometer from the village. There were no nuns in the village and few villagers had relatives who were nuns. All Stag rig residents were Dge lugs Buddhists.

Most villagers lived in flat-roofed rooms made of adobe bricks and wood. Certain financially well-off villagers lived in red-brick houses with glass windows. A single household commonly lived in an independent compound

¹³ In 2005, school fees were seventy RMB per term. In addition, pupils were required to bring fuel (dung, wood, and straw) to the school. The school had three grades, seven teachers, and approximately sixty students.

¹⁴ In 2005, school fees were approximately one hundred RMB per term and, additionally, students were required to give 150 kilograms of wheat and two and a half kilograms of rapeseed oil to the school. In return, students received 'free' food.

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consisting of a kitchen, a sitting room, two or three bedrooms, a shrine, a storeroom, and a stable, with a small garden in the center of the compound courtyard. Homes were decorated with pictures featuring, for example, the Potala Palace, yaks, Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976),¹⁵ and decorative vases, bowls, and dishes.

Most villagers were farmers and cultivated wheat, barley, beans, rape, and sesame. The village had two large apple orchards that were an important income source. Other crops included onions, garlic, potatoes, and vegetables. The most common foods were bread, noodles, and *rtsam pa*.¹⁶

Both men and women did farm work. Men left the village after planting the fields in late March to work in Ziling City, Mgo log (Guoluo 果洛) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and elsewhere in Mtsho sngon Province. Depending on the location, cash-earning activities included collecting and selling caterpillar fungus,¹⁷ construction work, and building sheep enclosures for herdsman. Generally, men and older boys returned to the village in August to assist in the annual harvest of family fields. In 2004 on average, each man or older boy who had left home to work returned with 2,000 RMB. Meanwhile, women stayed at home, tended the fields and livestock, and cared for old people, children, and the home.

Villagers owned cattle, sheep, donkeys, mules, goats, and chickens. Certain families owned a large number of

¹⁵ Many villagers have a picture of Mao Zedong in their home that they believed prevents evils from harming the family. Certain villagers believed Mao was an incarnation of *Spyan ras gzigs*.

¹⁶ Roasted barley flour mixed with dried cheese, butter, sugar, and hot tea.

¹⁷ *Cordyceps sinensis* is a medicinal herb (Tibetan: *dbyar rtsa dgun 'bu*, Chinese: *dong chong xia cao* 冬虫夏草).

sheep or goats; therefore, a member from each of these families was needed to herd livestock. Four or five families earned money by operating the village's four small stores, one restaurant,¹⁸ five flour-milling machines, and one medical clinic staffed by two doctors.¹⁹ Certain better-off villagers bought minibuses and trucks and commuted to work to such locations as the seats of Shar lung Township and Khri ka County.

Tibetan (Amdo dialect) was the everyday language of the villagers, but nearly all the young men could speak the Mtsho sngon Chinese Dialect. On the other hand, only a few women had some competence in oral Chinese.

Stag rig villagers wore clothing that closely resembled that of local Han Chinese, except for some elders who always wore Tibetan robes. For Lo sar 'the Tibetan New Year' and other festivals, village women and girls wore Tibetan robes and such decorations as coral necklaces and gold and silver earrings.

Village folk recreational activities included singing and dancing. The village leader announced male-only basketball competitions and male-female tug-of-war competitions held from the second to the eleventh days of Lo sar. A '*cham* 'temple dance' was held at This ba Monastery on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the first lunar month and a horse race was held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month near This ba Monastery, marking Lo sar's end.

¹⁸ In 2005, this was a one-room business with three tables that served noodles and dumplings.

¹⁹ In 2005, two doctors worked at the clinic. One was Han Chinese from Hedong Township who had limited competence in oral Tibetan. The other was Tibetan from Ka ring Township, Khri ka County. They treated patients with intravenous injections and other medicine, and did not use Traditional Tibetan or Chinese medicines.

Almost every family had a television set and one out of three families owned a VCD/ DVD player. A few villagers rented VCDs/ DVDs from the county seat and showed them to an audience in their home for 0.5 RMB per person. Chinese martial arts films and Tibetan dance and music videos were popular. Villagers also lent videos among themselves.

Children played hide-and-seek, wrestled, and gathered to participate in shuttlecock games.

MARRIAGE

Stag rig villagers generally marry Tibetans from the same and neighboring villages. The bride is often two to three years younger than the man, into whose home she generally moves after marriage. The couple lives and works together. The children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both parents. A married person has greater status than an unmarried person.

Marriage is considered vital because it continues a family's line of descent and allows the family's protective deity to continue receiving sacrifices. It is believed that when sacrifices to the family's protective deity end, the family will also end. The protective deity without a family will be angry and punish those who enter the empty home. A final reason to marry is to have children who will care for the parents when they are old.

These reasons explain why unmarried villagers in their thirties, with the exception of monks and students, are viewed as abnormal. Villagers who marry between sixteen and twenty are admired. Conversely, unmarried villagers older than thirty are considered undesirable. Examples of men in this category are thieves, persistent wanderers, the deaf, the blind, and the mentally ill. Examples of women in

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this category include sex workers, and women with mental and physical handicaps. Such people are generally excluded from village leadership positions, important village meetings, and marriage rituals.

The Pre-Marital Hair Dressing Ritual²⁰

There are four key rituals in the lives of female villagers. The first we describe is the hair cutting²¹ ritual, which is held when girls are three years old and on the third day of Lo sar in the third year that the girls have lived.²² Such girls are considered ready for solid food and stronger. The mothers can now attend village activities at night, freely receive guests, and are less careful about eating outside the home.

Village males have the same rituals, except for the hair dressing ritual.

The hair dressing ritual announces that the girl has become a young woman and is ready to marry. After the ritual, she may have a boyfriend and ponder her future married life. The hair dressing ritual is held when a girl is thirteen,²³ fifteen, or seventeen years old. Fifteen is the usual age. If a family holds this ritual when the girl is thirteen, it is probably because they wish to display their wealth or because the girl's grandparents wish to see their

²⁰ *skra phab* = hair done.

²¹ *bang skra* = baby hair.

²² To illustrate this, imagine a child born New Year's Eve before twelve o'clock midnight. The next day, the first day of the first month, she is considered to be two years old. One year later, on the third day of the first lunar month, she has the hair cutting ritual.

²³ The girl might have been as young as nine years old before about 1955.

granddaughter have this ritual before they die.

A girl might also have the hair dressing ritual when she is nineteen if a close relative has died, which has made having the ritual when she was younger impossible, because the family cannot afford the ritual,²⁴ or if the girl's health prevented holding the ritual.

During the hair ritual, the girl's hairstyle is changed to that of a young woman. Nowadays, this is only required on the ritual day but, in the past, this hairstyle change was permanent and anyone who went through the hair dressing ritual no longer dressed her hair like that of an unmarried girl. Instead, she braided her hair like that of a married woman and always wore hair ornaments.

Much of the ritual has been lost, although certain important ritual elements have been reintroduced, including choosing a hairdresser, several unique hairstyles, and the use of special ornaments. Below, 'brug mo skyid (b. 1983) describes her hair dressing ritual:

Account Six ('brug mo skyid)

I had my hair dressing ritual at the age of seventeen. Before the arrival of Lo sar in 1998, my family chose an appropriate hairdresser. An auspicious day for arranging my hair was determined by Father visiting an astrologer at This ba Monastery, who chose the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month. Most girls my age had the ritual on this same day. After the day was chosen, Mother went to find skilled hairdressers. She needed two assistants to dress my hair. Tradition says hairdressers must be without physical deformities, not divorcees, and must have zodiac years compatible with that of the girl. It is believed that a

²⁴ The total cost of this ritual was approximately 3,000 RMB in 2005.

poor choice of a hairdresser may result in the girl having an unhappy future.

My hair was plaited into several dozen tiny braids by Mother and the two hairdressers in the courtyard of our home beginning at about nine in the morning. A *ral ba* 'thick flat braid' was made for the silver hair ornaments down the center of the back of my head. These hair ornaments are only worn today during such rituals as the hair dressing ritual and weddings. Some girls also decorate their hair with coral and turquoise but I didn't want to because I already felt weighed down by the heavy silver hair ornaments. It took four to five hours to braid my hair. For the first two hours I thought it was fine and I could sit still but gradually, my legs grew numb and I couldn't feel them anymore. My mother then brought a thick blanket for me to sit on. My whole body continued to become more uncomfortable. My bones started aching. I leaned this way and that way, trying to ease my discomfort, but this made it difficult for the hairdressers to continue. One of the hairdressers began to pull me by my hair as I moved about. Mother said if I didn't co-operate, then they would hit me on the head with the comb. Fortunately, that punishment did not ensue.

From beginning to end, my only wish was to finish the hairdressing as soon as possible. Finally, it was finished, and my first action was to rush to the toilet. When I returned, my mother burnt juniper needles in a ladle and blew the smoke around me to bring me luck.

My family prepared a Tibetan lambskin robe, a new fox-fur hat, and a bright blue sash. These articles have stayed with me since the day of my hairdressing ritual. This ritual continued on the third day of the first lunar month with a banquet. The day before the ritual, the family prepared dumplings, mutton, beef, pork, steamed and fried bread, and *gro ma* (cooked rice with *gro ma* 'tiny wild yams' with

added sugar and butter). Two of my nephews were sent to invite all our relatives, friends, neighbors, and clan members.

At night, all my family members stayed up very late. They ensured everything was well prepared and then gathered for a grand feast. Some nearby neighbors also came, feasted, sang, and gave good wishes, such as "*Tshe ring lo brgya yong bar smon* May you have an eternally happy life."

Father and my brothers burned a large offering of roasted barley flour and juniper branches on the roof of our home at midnight to A myes Brtan skyong²⁵ and such family protective deities as Dpal ldan lha mo.²⁶

We only slept two or three hours that night. The ornaments made my sleep very uncomfortable. I couldn't turn from side to side, because I had to carefully keep the ornaments pressed flat. My brothers and some relatives stayed up chatting, singing, and watching television.

When the brightest star appeared in the eastern sky in the early morning, all my family members and helpers prepared for this busy, happy day. Mother and my sister-in-law made a big fire in the kitchen stove where a pot of milk tea with jujubes and sugar was heated. Father took boiled milk tea from the pot with a metal ladle and went to the house roof to make offerings with roasted barley flour, juniper branches, and *rgyal bo* 'flower-shaped

²⁵ The mountain deity of Mountain Rgyab ri, which is situated near Stag rig Village. All villagers are his devotees.

²⁶ Dpal lden lha mo is the most common family protective deity in the village. There are two other family protective deities in the village—The'u rang and Rgyal po—though these are considered demons rather than deities by people whose families do not venerate them.

fried bread'.²⁷ He chanted scripture while offering *bsang*,²⁸ and scattered the milk tea with the ladle to the four directions. When Father completed the offerings, all my family members honored Dpal Idan lha mo by prostrating.

We then sat on the *hu tse* around a short-legged table and drank bowls of buttered milk tea. Everyone must drink this tea. This is the first part of the hair dressing ritual.

Then it was time to dress me. Mother brought out my new Tibetan robe, fox-fur hat, sash, shoes, several silver ornaments, and a coral necklace. When everything was ready, Mother and my sister began dressing me, putting on the clothes and attaching the ornaments one by one. Finally, they attached a white silk scarf to the hair ornaments.

My companion (my niece) was dressed in a beautiful Tibetan robe. If a girl has no sisters, female cousins, or nieces, then she chooses her best friend to be her companion. When the dressing came to an end, my niece and I each stood by the gate on opposite sides, and welcomed arriving guests. Nowadays, this is the only duty of the girl having the ritual but, in the past, my niece and I would have had to sing the song below while circling the center pillar of the main room three times.

²⁷ *Rgyal bo* may be fried or baked and is only common during Lo sar.

²⁸ An offering of barley or wheat flour mixed with juniper.

1

¹གནམ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྩེ་བས་བརྒྱད།
²ཅེ་མོ་བརྒྱད་སྤང་།
³དཀར་ཁུང་གོར་མོ།
⁴གནམ་ལ་ལྟ་སྤང་།
⁵གནམ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྩེ་བས་བརྒྱད།
⁶བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

¹ gnam 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad
² rtse mo brgyad snang
³ dkar khung gor mo
⁴ gnam la lta snang
⁵ gnam 'khor lo rtsib brgyad
⁶ bkra shis shog

¹ The sky is like the Eight-spoked Wheel!³⁰
² That has just eight spokes.
³ The round skylight,
⁴ Facing the sky.
⁵ May the Eight-spoked Wheel-like sky,
⁶ Brim with auspiciousness!

2

¹ཀ་དོ་གོར་མོ།
²ས་ལ་ལྟ་སྤང་།

²⁹ This song was recorded from Khro go (b. 1926 in Stag rig Village) in his home in Stag rig Village, 11 February 2002. He learned the song from his sisters when he was a child.

³⁰ The Dharmacakra (Sanskrit), Dhammacakka (Pāli), *chos kyi 'khor lo* (Tibetan), *falun* 法輪 (Chinese), 'Wheel of Dharma', 'Wheel of Doctrine', 'Wheel of Law' symbolizes the Buddha's teaching of the path to enlightenment.

³ས་པད་མ་འདབ་བརྒྱད།
⁴བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

¹ka rdo gor mo
²sa ya lta snang
³sa pad ma 'dob brgyad
⁴bkra shis shog

¹The round stone-based pillar,
²Facing the earth,
³May the eight-petaled lotus-like earth,
⁴Brim with auspiciousness.

3

¹ཁྱུ་ཤོ་ཤོ་ཤོ།
²ལྷ་ཡ་ཉ་ལྷང་།
³ལྷ་གཡུ་འབྲུག་ཚོན་མོ།
⁴བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

¹rgya sgo lho sgo
²lho ya lta snang
³lho g.yu 'brug sngon mo
⁴bkra shis shog

¹The main south-gate,
²Facing the south,
³May the south turquoise-blue dragon,
⁴Brim with auspiciousness!

4

¹ཁྱིམ་འདི་བ་ཚང་གི།
²ཁང་བ་འདི་ཚོ།
³ཕྱི་རིམ་ལྷ་ལྷང་།
⁴ས་པད་མ་ས་ལྷ་འབྲུག་གྱི།
⁵བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག

¹ khyim 'di ba tshang gyi
² khang ba 'di tsho
³ phyi rim lnga snang
⁴ sa pad ma sa sna 'bum gi
⁵ bkra shis shog

¹ In this particular home,
² These rooms,
³ Have five circles of walls outside,
⁴ May the hundreds of thousands of armspans of wide
earth,
⁵ Brim with auspiciousness.

5

¹ ཁང་བ་འདི་ཚོ།
² བར་ཁྱིམ་ལྔ་སྒྲང་།
³ ཁང་བ་འབུམ་གི།
⁴ བརྒྱ་ཤིས་ཤོག

¹ khang ba 'di tsho
² br khrim lnga snang
³ khang ba 'bum gi
⁴ bkra shis shog

¹ These rooms,
² Have five circles of walls in the middle,
³ May these hundreds of thousands of rooms,
⁴ Brim with auspiciousness.

6

¹ ཁང་བ་འདི་ཚོ།
² རྒྱང་ཁྱིམ་ལྔ་སྒྲང་།
³ མིང་འབུམ་གི།
⁴ བརྒྱ་ཤིས་ཤོག

¹ khang ba 'di tsho
² nang rim lnga snang
³ mi nga 'bum gi
⁴ bkra shis shog

¹ These rooms,
² Have five circles of rooms inside,
³ May these hundreds of thousands of people,
⁴ Brim with auspiciousness!

This song eulogizes various aspects of the family's home, e.g., gate, kitchen skylight, and so on and also expresses the girl's good wishes for her family's future.

Guests came to celebrate my hair dressing ritual with gifts of bolts of silk for making Tibetan robes, coats and shirts that had been bought in towns, silk scarves, tea-bricks, bottles of liquor, and *rgyal bo*. All the gifts of silk and clothes were displayed on a line strung up in the yard. People compete to give the best gift, which is determined by the silk and cloth's quality, length, and color. The tea bricks and bottles of liquor were lined up on windowsills and on the ground. Bread was collected in baskets. Guests were offered milk tea, dumplings, bread, mutton, beef, pork, liquor, and rice with butter, sugar, and baby yams. Guests gave such auspicious wishes to me as, "*Bu mo, khyod tshe ring bar smon* Girl, may you live a long life," and "*Khyod la bde skyid kyi ma 'ong ba zhig yod bar smon* May you have a happy future," and also gave five or ten RMB, candy, and fruits directly to me.

One or two singers sang for three to four hours that afternoon. I was a student and had not worn a Tibetan robe for a long time. I soon felt exhausted after a long while of wearing the heavy clothes and ornaments. Every part of my body ached and I felt weak. I begged Mother to take

them off for a while, but she refused. She said that it would be impolite to the guests and our relatives. Most guests left by six p.m. Only the guests who drank liquor stayed and had dinner with my family.

The gifts were placed in boxes as the ritual neared completion, and I took off the robe and ornaments. Three days later, I was allowed to change my hairstyle back to the common way of one or two big braids.

Rules of Inclusion

A desirable wife is healthy; filial; obedient; from a rich family; has a good personality; is skillful at cooking, sewing, cleaning, and farming; has kind and easy-going parents; has compatible family protective deities; and lacks body odor.

An ideal husband is strong, hard-working, and has a good family background.

Marriage partners should not be too closely related³¹ or have incompatible zodiac years. A monk astrologer at This ba Monastery is consulted regarding compatibility. He determines that the proposed match is excellent, acceptable, or inappropriate. If it is the latter, nearly all families stop further wedding plans and instead, look for a new prospective spouse.

³¹ Maternal cousins are suitable marriage partners because villagers believe a mother's *sha* 'flesh' is inherited, which is thought to be soft. Marriage between close paternal relatives, however, is taboo because a father's *rus pa* 'bones' are inherited, which are considered strong and hard consequently, if close paternal relatives marry, handicapped children may result.

Spouse Selection

Free Choice

Most village marriages are based on romantic love. The boy and girl first meet in such public situations as when the villagers dig irrigation ditches together, at movie showings, dances, song festivals, and night feasts during Lo sar. They might also meet on the way to fetch water or while herding livestock. Girls generally do not show interest in boys first; they wait for boys to first show interest.

A boy chooses the right moment to approach a girl he is interested in and tell her his feelings. The boy takes her finger-ring or headscarf if she seems interested and secretly takes it to her home that night. The boy knocks on the front gate lightly three or four times and the girl opens it, provided her father and brothers are not strict. If the girl's father and brothers oppose such night visits, the boy climbs over the home compound wall or throws stones on the roof of the girl's bedroom, which is generally a small, single room. When they are together that night, they express their feelings and determine if they are right for each other. If this encounter goes well, they often associate with each other.

The boy and the girl are generally from the same village. If they are from different villages and the boys from the girl's village discover their relationship, several boys may quietly climb over the wall of the girl's home after the boy and the girl fall asleep, enter the room, and beat both of them. The couple's cries and screams for help are useless because the girl's parents and other relatives will not interfere. The boys doing the beating feel that the girl has been taken from the boys in her village. The beating is revenge and is done in the hope it will get the girl back. This also tests the boy and girl's relationship. The boy comes again and begins to prepare for marriage if he really loves her. It is the same for

the girl. She only maintains the relationship with the boy if she is serious.

Arranged Marriage

Arranged marriage is managed by the boy and girl's parents, brothers, and uncles. If the family has no male family members, then the mother makes the decisions. First, the boy's side chooses a suitable girl for the boy. They investigate the girl's family's background, personality, work skills, zodiac year, and so on. Next, they ask the boy for his opinion. If he agrees, they choose two matchmakers who visit the girl's home. Meanwhile, a female relative who knows the girl attempts to persuade her to accept the prospective groom.

Engagement

Stealing the Bride

We now examine recent romantic marriage in Stag rig Village. Lha mo represents a typical girl and Don 'grub, a typical village boy. If Lha mo agrees with Don 'grub's proposal, Don 'grub asks his parents', Uncle Bkra shis and Aunt Dpa' mo's, opinion. If they think Lha mo is an acceptable daughter-in-law, Don 'grub makes a date with Lha mo to elope. This often happens during Lo sar between the third and fifteenth days of the first lunar month, because young people have more time to consider their future at this time.

Don 'grub asks one or two friends to accompany him. After midnight on the set date, Don 'grub and his friends go secretly near Lha mo's home on motorbikes. They throw a

stone on the roof of Lha mo's room. She puts on a Tibetan robe she has prepared and tiptoes out. The boys hang a white silk scarf on the gate frame of her home. When the girl's family notices the next morning that the girl is gone and sees the white silk scarf on the gate frame, they understand that she has been taken to her boyfriend's home.

Meanwhile, Don 'grub's family members—Uncle Bkra shis, Aunt Dpa' mo, Don 'grub's brothers and sisters, and other important relatives—busily prepare and wait for their future daughter-in-law's arrival. They burn much *bsang* as an offering to the deities in the yard of the home or on the roof. They place a white felt carpet at the right corner by the stove. A dragon-decorated bowl of milk tied with white sheep wool is prepared on the stove. When Lha mo arrives, she sits on the carpet and flicks milk in the prepared bowl into the air with her right ring finger three times. These are offerings to the family's protective deity. Next, Lha mo and Don 'grub's friends are offered food and milk tea. Lha mo does not eat or drink. The friends eventually leave, and Lha mo and Don 'grub sleep together that night.

The next day, Aunt Dpa' mo calls two or three skilled hair-makers to braid Lha mo's hair into several dozen tiny braids, and a big flat braid at the back center of her head for the silver hair ornaments. If Lha mo is bold or familiar with the hair-makers, she chats with them. If she is not, she covers her face with a headscarf or her sleeves. She does not let others see her face and remains quiet. When the hair braiding is finished, she wears a Tibetan robe and hair ornaments provided by Don 'grub's family.

Don 'grub's family asks two matchmakers—Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje—who are aged and respectable, to go to Lha mo's home with 300 RMB, a good quality piece of decorated silk, two bottles of liquor, and a silk scarf. Don 'grub's family also might invite one or two other aged relatives. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje apologize for

taking Lha mo away without permission and suggest that Lha mo's parents, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mstho, give their daughter to Don 'grub, highlight Don 'grub and his family's good points, and stress Lha mo's agreement.

Lha mo's family might not give an immediate answer but instead, demand the immediate return of their daughter. Finally, a date is fixed for returning Lha mo and Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje depart. Lha mo customarily returns within two days.

Lha mo returns to her home with Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje. If Uncle Bsod nams, Aunt Pad ma mtsho, and Lha mo's brothers strongly disagree with the marriage, they remove the clothes and hair ornaments she took from Don 'grub's home, lock her in a room, and ask a child to watch her. If her family is not seriously opposed, they do not lock her in a room. Lha mo might have to run to Don 'grub's home two or three times to express her sincere love for him before her family agrees. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje may thus have to visit Lha mo's home two or three times before drinking contract liquor.

Arranged Marriage

After Uncle Bkra shis and Aunt Dpa' mo select a suitable girl, Lha mo, for their son, Don 'grub, and he agrees, they ask two matchmakers, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje, to visit the girl's parents, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho.

Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje are not close relatives of Rdo rje or Lha mo's family, otherwise they would not be impartial. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje take gifts of cash, silk scarves, tea bricks, and bottles of liquor. When they arrive, they sit at a table near the stove in the living room or on the *hu tse*. Tea is served in dragon-decorated bowls. After general conversation, Uncle Tshe dpa'

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and Uncle Rdo rje begin talking with Uncle Bsod nams, Aunt Pad ma mtsho, and Lha mo's elder brothers about the purpose of the visit, and detail Don 'grub's family background.

Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje ask if Lha mo is engaged. If the answer is negative, they ask her parents and elder brothers to allow Lha mo to marry Don 'grub. The first request is nearly always refused. Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho tell Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje that they must consult with Lha mo and her uncles and grandparents. Then Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje return and describe the meeting.

Afterwards, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho consult their important relatives. If Don 'grub lives in another village, Uncle Bsod nams and Aunt Pad ma mtsho ask a relative to visit, or they go themselves without Don 'grub's knowledge, to verify information provided by Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje. The next time Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje's visit, they directly ask about the family's answer. The matchmakers generally visit Lha mo's family three times before the family gives final consent.

Drinking Gyos sha gyos chang 'Contract Liquor'. On the appointed date, Lha mo's family invites such important relatives as paternal and maternal uncles; prepares boiled mutton, beef, pork, and dumplings; and wait for Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje's arrival.

Don 'grub's family has sent Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje with more than 1,000 RMB. When Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje arrive, they and Lha mo's relatives are offered food and milk tea. Uncle Bsod nams takes out the bottles of liquor Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje brought on the previous visit and opens them. Everyone is offered a dragon-decorated bowl of liquor. Before they drink, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje take out the money and give it

to Uncle Bsod nams in thanks for giving his daughter to Rdo rje. About one hundred RMB is returned. Then they flick liquor into the air with their right ring fingers three times and drink, symbolizing that Lha mo's family agrees to the proposal and formally gives her to Don 'grub. Finally, they select a date for discussing the bridewealth. From the day of drinking contract liquor, Don 'grub may visit Lha mo's family whenever he wants, and Lha mo freely visits Don 'grub's home.

Bridewealth Discussion and Choosing a Date for the Wedding Ritual. On the day chosen for the bridewealth discussion, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje once again visit Lha mo's home. The value of bridewealth varies. If Lha mo is the only or most loved daughter of her parents, then Uncle Bsod nams, Aunt Pad ma mtsho, and their relatives do not ask for much bridewealth, e.g., one or two new Tibetan robes and other clothes for Aunt Pad ma mtsho and other important male relatives as compensation for rearing Lha mo. The bride's family understands that to ask for a large bridewealth means that the groom's family is put in difficult circumstances and later, when their daughter lives in the groom's home, she will be resented because she is the cause of the difficulty. Nevertheless, many families do ask for a large bridewealth.

The highest bridewealth for a village girl in 2000 was 3,000-4,000 RMB in cash; a lambskin Tibetan robe; a Tibetan summer robe trimmed with otter skin; three to five strings of coral; gold earrings and finger-rings; two silver ornaments that are hung in front of the robe; several shirts, coats, and pairs of pants; and clothes for the girl's parents, brothers, uncles, and male cousins. All are prepared before the wedding. The girl's parents and uncles decide if the bridewealth is adequate by listening to community members' comments.

If Lha mo will live in Don 'grub's home, the wedding ritual is held in his home. Wedding preparations including food and seating are the responsibility of Don 'grub's side. Lha mo's side decides the number of *A zhang*.³² Weddings are commonly held during Lo sar on a day suggested by the monk astrologer at This ba Monastery.

Broken Engagements. Engagements are sometimes broken. Lha mo may meet another boy and elope with him, in which case Lha mo's family must pay Don 'grub's family about 1,000 RMB in compensation. Don 'grub might find another girl or want to remarry his ex-wife, in which case Don 'grub's family must pay. Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje act as judges if an engagement is broken.

Wedding Preparation

Before the wedding at the bride's home, Uncle Bsod nams' family makes one or two Tibetan robes for Lha mo, and buys new modern-style³³ clothes for her. Aunt Pad ma mtsho finds two hairdressers to braid Lha mo's hair for her wedding, with her hairstyle being the same as in the hairdressing ritual. A female companion for Lha mo is also identified. Bright red, yellow, blue, green, and pink sashes are bought for Don 'grub as part of the dowry.

Wedding preparations require much work and are

³² As explained earlier, this refers to a group of men who accompany the bride to the groom's side on the wedding day, including the bride's father, brothers, other close male relatives, and men from the bride's clan.

³³ Western-style clothing, including suits, coats, shirts, trousers, and shoes, are referred to as *rgya lwa* 'Chinese clothes'.

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expensive for the groom's family. More than five months are required to prepare for a wedding. First, much money is needed for the materials to make the bride's clothes. These include lambskins, good quality silk, cloth, otter skin, sashes, and so on. A skilled local tailor is invited to make the clothes. Silver is given to a silversmith to make ornaments.

Meat is the main banquet food, which is not a major difficulty if the family has sheep and cattle. A family lacking livestock buys five or six sheep, one or two yaks, and pork. Rapeseed oil, green vegetables, radishes, vermicelli noodles, baby wild yams, rice, butter, sugar, candy, cigarettes, and liquor are also prepared.

Finally, after all the materials are collected, relatives, neighbors, and clan members come to Don 'grub's home two days before the wedding to help. Men cut meat into pieces and boil it, chop firewood, fetch water, arrange seating, and prepare dishes of candy, bread, and meat. Women gather in the kitchen and make both steamed and boiled dumplings, fry bread, and cook rice with butter, wild baby yams, and sugar.

Don 'grub's family sends children or young men on the afternoon of the day before the wedding to inform the guests, including Uncle Bkra shis' family relatives, clan members, friends, and other villagers.

The Wedding Ritual and Banquet

Both families rise at about five a.m. on the wedding day. There are two important tasks for the bride and the groom's sides on this day. The first is to invite the groom to the bride's home and give the dowry. The second is to escort the bride to the groom's home and hold the wedding ritual.

Inviting the groom to the bride's home (*mag 'bod*)

Don 'grub's family gets up after an alarm clock rings. The women make a fire in the stove and boil a pot of milk tea. The men build a fire on the roof and offer local deities roasted barley flour, juniper, the first ladle of milk tea from the pot, and one or two *rgyal bo*. Next, Uncle Bkra shis lights three butter lamps; puts dishes of fried bread, fruit, candy, and *rgyal bo* before the image of the family's protective deity; lights three butter lamps in the family's home shrine; and offers bowls of pure water. All the family members prostrate in front of the family protective deity and in the shrine after the offerings are prepared.

Next, everyone is given a bowl of buttered milk tea. They finish the milk tea, eat a quick breakfast, and begin to dress Don 'grub in his best lambskin Tibetan robe, a bright colored sash, a new fox-fur hat, and a pair of boots. The other men who accompany Don 'grub to the bride's home also dress in fine Tibetan robes and fox-fur hats.

When all is ready, Don 'grub, accompanied by Uncle Bkra shis, his brothers, his maternal and paternal uncles, Uncle Tshe dpa', Uncle Rdo rje, his friends, and other clan men, go to the bride's home. When they reach the gate of Lha mo's home, Uncle Bsod nam's side, including the bride's family members, relatives, and clan members, receive them. Uncle Brtan ba, a respected man from the bride's side, holds a dragon-decorated bowl of liquor tied with white sheep wool and flicks liquor with a juniper tree twig at Don 'grub three times to expel bad influences that may have come with Don 'grub. Next, they are seated on white felt and are offered milk tea, dumplings, meat, rice, and bread.

After greetings and general conversation, Uncle Tshe dpa' stands up and congratulates the new couple. Uncle Rdo rje follows. Then an eloquent man from the bride's side asks Don 'grub to stand on the white carpet and gives the sashes

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as the dowry that has been prepared by the *A zhang*. The sashes are tied across the groom's body and then Don 'grub's side leaves, signaling the end of the first part of the wedding ritual.

Escorting the bride to the groom's home

Lha mo's family begins dressing Lha mo soon after the groom and his entourage leave. She wears her new lambskin Tibetan robe, silver ornaments, strings of coral, and fox-fur hat which have been provided by her family. Aunt Pad ma mtsho or her sister-in-law attaches a white silk scarf to the hair ornaments. Aunt Pad ma mtsho, Lha mo, and other female relatives weep because, from this day on, Lha mo is no longer a member of Uncle Bsod nams' family and must now face a new life with strangers. The bride's companion, Me tog, is also dressed in a fine lambskin Tibetan robe, silver ornaments, and a fox-fur hat.

The *A zhang* are all male and wear lambskin Tibetan robes with little decoration.

The bride leaves accompanied by Me tog and the *A zhang*. Me tog carries a basket full of *rgyal bo* and the lower part of a cooked sheep's back. The sheep's tail should protrude from the back of the basket. They go on foot if Don 'grub home is nearby, or by car if it is far away. Lha mo's group is welcomed three times by the groom's side on the way to Don 'grub's home.

The first group from the groom's side waits about one kilometer from Don 'grub's home. They offer a bowl of liquor to the main *A zhang*—Uncle Bsod nams. The *A zhang* flicks the liquor into the air three times and continues on. The second group waits fifty meters from Don 'grub's home, and again offers a bowl of liquor to the main *A zhang*. The final group receives them when they reach the home. The

first two groups are always men, but the last group includes everyone who has come to attend the wedding. Young people are dressed in fine Tibetan robes with bright colored sashes while elders wear common Tibetan robes that are usually dark colored and lined with imitation lambskin. Some children are dressed in Tibetan robes and some wear modern clothes.

As they receive Lha mo and the *A zhang*, they say, "*A zhang tshang bde mo yin nam* How are all you *A zhang*?"

The *A zhang* reply, "*Bde mo yin, bde mo yin* Fine, fine."

An older woman from Don 'grub's side comes with a bowl decorated with dragons or the Eight Auspicious Symbols³⁴ tied with white sheep-wool string. The bowl is full of milk. She flicks the milk with a juniper twig three times towards Lha mo. Afterwards, Lha mo and the *A zhang* pass through the gateway. In the past, the moment the bride entered the gateway, the groom and bride's sides struggled for the bride's hat, competing to see which side could keep it. This was not done in 2005.

When Lha mo and Me tog reach the entrance, Aunt Dpa' mo or Don 'grub's sister-in-law takes the basket from Me tog. Then Lha mo and Me tog are welcomed into the living room or the kitchen and sit on white felt at the right of the stove. Lha mo is given a bowl of milk tied with white sheep wool. She flicks the milk into the air with her ring finger three times and then they move into the new couple's bedroom.

Don 'grub's sister helps Lha mo remove the clothes and ornaments provided by her parents and put on new clothes and ornaments prepared by Don 'grub's family.

³⁴ The Eight Auspicious Symbols are a conch shell, a lotus, a wheel, a parasol, an endless knot, a pair of gold fish, a banner announcing victory, and a treasure vase.

The *A zhang* are welcomed into the living room or onto the *hu tse*, where they sit on white felt. All are offered milk tea; dumplings; mutton; beef; pork; fried bread; rice with butter, sugar and wild baby yams; fruit; candies; sunflower seeds; barley liquor; and cigarettes.

Don 'grub helps his family welcome the guests who bring various gifts. The relatives and close friends usually give fine pieces of silk, bottles of expensive liquor, silk scarves, and *rgyal bo*. They also give fifty to one hundred RMB. Other villagers come with sashes and *rgyal bo*. The gifts of silk and sashes are displayed in the courtyard and the guests are entertained in another big room. The male guests are seated on the *hu tse* and the female guests sit by the stove. There are dishes of fruit, fried bread, mutton, beef, pork, candies, and sunflower seeds in front of them. They are served milk tea; stuffed dumplings; and rice with butter, sugar, and wild baby yams. Bowls of liquor are also offered to the guests.

After the *A zhang* finish the meal and are engaged in general conversation, they describe what Lha mo brought with her—including the number of Tibetan robes, coats, pairs of pants, shirts, headscarves, pairs of shoes, and silver ornaments. Some girls bring livestock with them. Then Don 'grub's side gives the bridewealth. When giving the bridewealth, Uncle Tshe dpa' and Uncle Rdo rje bargain with the *A zhang* in order to lower the amount. The *A zhang* go out and discuss the matter two or three times. In the end, the final amount is lowered by several hundred RMB.

Meanwhile, the male guests are gathered in the living room and on the *hu tse* with the *A zhang*. The female guests usually stay outside and listen to the discussion about the bridewealth and how many clothes and animals the bride will bring. When this discussion ends, Uncle Tshe dpa' stands facing the *A zhang* at the end of the row of the guests with

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the bridewealth in his arms, and orates:³⁵

ཡ།
¹ དེ་རིང་གནས་ལ་དུས་སྒྱིར་བཟང་།
² ས་ལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་འཕེལ།
³ བདེ་ལེགས་འབྱུང་བའི་ཉིན་མོ།
⁴ སྤུན་སྲུང་ཚྭ་གས་པའི་དུས་ཚོད་འདིར།
⁵ རྩོམ་འཇམ་བྱ་སྒྲིང་གི་བྱང་ཕྱོགས།
⁶ བོད་ཁ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་ཡུལ་ཁམས།
⁷ སྤང་མདོ་ཁམས་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཞེ་བ།
⁸ མ་ཚུའི་སྤོན་མའི་སྤོ་ཕྱོགས།
⁹ ཤིང་ཅན་དན་ལོ་འདབ་རྒྱས་ས།
¹⁰ བྱ་དཔའ་བོས་དཔའ་སྤང་རྒྱག་ས།
¹¹ མི་བཙན་བོས་བྲིམས་ཁ་ཞིབ་ས།
¹² ཕྱོགས་སོ་སོའི་འགྲལ་བ་འདྲ་གནས།
¹³ གཡང་སྤེ་དཔལ་གྱི་ར་བ་འདིའི།
¹⁴ མ་བྱ་མའི་མགོ་སྤྲ་སྤྲས་ས།
¹⁵ རྩ་འདྲི་བའི་སྤོ་ལན་འཐེན་ས།
¹⁶ སྤྱིད་པའི་སྤོ་ཁྱིམ་ཕྱག་མོ་འདིར།
¹⁷ ཟས་དཀར་དམར་གྱི་ཐེར་ཁ་བཤམས་ས།
¹⁸ སྤྲིས་པོ་མོ་འགྲོན་ལ་འདུས་ཏེ།
¹⁹ ཞང་བཟང་ཆ་མོ་བསུ་བའི་བྲལ་བས་བྱས།

ya
¹ de ring gnam la dus sbyor bzang
² sa la bkra shis 'phel
³ bde legs 'byung ba'i nyin mo
⁴ phun sum tshogs pa'i dus tshod 'dir
⁵ lho 'dzam bu gling gi byang phyogs
⁶ bod kha ba can gyi yul khams
⁷ smad mdo khams yul gyi lte ba

³⁵ 'brug mo skyid recorded this speech from Lcags thar rgyal (b. 1963 in Stag rig Village) at his village home 20 February 2002.

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⁸ rma chu sngon mo'i lho phyogs
⁹ shing tsan dan lo 'dab rgyas sa
¹⁰ bu dpa' bos dpa' skad rgyag sa
¹¹ mi btsan pos khrims kha zhib sa
¹² phyogs so so'i 'grul ba 'du gnas
¹³ g.yang sde dpal gyi ra ba 'di'i
¹⁴ ma bu mo'i mgo skra slas sa
¹⁵ rta mdo ba'i glo lan 'then sa
¹⁶ skyid pa'i lha khyim phyug mo 'dir
¹⁷ zas dkar dmar gyi sder kha bshams sa
¹⁸ skyes pho mo 'gron la 'dus te
¹⁹ zhing bzang tsha mo bsu ba'i grabs byas

Ya!

¹ The (alignment of stars in the) sky today marks a wonderful
day
² The earth flourishes with auspiciousness,
³ It is a day teeming with a promising future,
⁴ At this perfect time of this thriving day,
⁵ In North Jambudvipa, the southern continent.³⁶
⁶ Situated in Tibet, the land of snows,
⁷ At the center of Eastern Tibet,
⁸ South of the blue Yellow River,
⁹ Richly grown with sandalwood,
¹⁰ Courageous men roar with bravery,
¹¹ It is a place where mighty people have thorough laws.
¹² Guests from all directions gather,
¹³ In this harmonious village,
¹⁴ Women plait their hair,
¹⁵ Fine horses are tamed,
¹⁶ At this happy, prosperous, heavenly home,
¹⁷ Various foods are displayed,

³⁶ A continent south of Mount Meru in an enormous ocean according to Buddhist cosmogony.

¹⁸ Men and women come together as guests,

¹⁹ In preparation to welcome the well-lineaged girl.

ཡ།

¹ ལ་གཅིག་གི་གོང་རྩ་ལ།

² གཉིན་ཚང་ལྷན་རྒྱས་མཉམ་དུ་འདུས།

³ ས་དང་ཨ་ཁུས་གྲོས་བྱས།

⁴ མ་དང་སྲ་མོས་ཚད་བཅད།

⁵ བྱ་ཆུང་རང་གིས་བརྒྱ་ལས་བཅལ།

⁶ བརྒྱད་ལས་བདམས་ཏེ།

⁷ ཞང་ཚང་གིས་གསེར་གྱི་ཀ་བར་འཇུས།

⁸ དདུལ་གྱི་བྱ་བར་བཅངས་བ་ན།

⁹ ཞང་ཚང་གིས་ཀྱང་།

¹⁰ སོ་ལ་སློ་བྱིས།

¹¹ མོ་ལ་ཁ་བསྐྱར།

¹² གཡང་གི་མདུད་བཞིག་སྟེ།

¹³ བྱ་མོ་གནས་ལ་བྱིན་བ་ནས།

¹⁴ བདག་ཞང་འཛིན་གཉིས་ཀ་རྩ་འཛོད།

¹⁵ ལྷ་འོ་ཉི་མ་ཤར་བར་གྱུར་རོ།

ya

¹ lo ngo gcig gi gong rol la

² gnyen tshang lhan rgyas mnyam du 'dus

³ pha dang a khus gros byas

⁴ ma dang sru mos rtsad bca

⁵ bu chung rang gis brgya las btsal

⁶ brgyad las bdams te

⁷ zhang tshang gi gser gyi ka bar 'jus

⁸ dngul gyi thu bar bcangs ba na

⁹ zhang tshang gis kyang

¹⁰ pho la blo dris

¹¹ mo la kha bsdur

¹² g.yang gi mdud bshig ste

¹³ bu mo gnas la byin pa nas

¹⁴ bdag zhang 'dzin gnyis ka lha ngo 'phrod

¹⁵ lha ngor nyi ma shar bar gyur ro

Ya!

- ¹ One year before this year,
² The groom's members gathered,
³ Discussions were held by the father and uncles,
⁴ Investigations were done by the mother and sisters,
⁵ Choices were made by the groom himself among hundreds,
⁶ The making of a selection was then done among eight,
⁷ As he clutched the golden pillar of the *A zhang's* home,
⁸ And tugged the silvery hem of the girl he wished to marry,
⁹ The bride's side,
¹⁰ Consulted men for advice,
¹¹ Talked to women for perceptions,
¹² Having unraveled the bond of the family fortune,
¹³ The daughter was given as a bride.
¹⁴ The meeting of you *A zhang* and I is made possible,
¹⁵ Our faces are then warm with sunshine.

ཡ།

- ¹ ད་ནངས་ནམ་མཁའ་གསལ་པའི་དུས།
² མ་སྐུ་མང་པོ་ལྟན་དུ་འཛིན་ཏེ།
³ ཕ་བཟང་བུ་མའི་གཡས་སྐྱ་གཡས་ལ་ཤད།
⁴ གཡོན་སྐྱ་གཡོན་ལ་ཤད་དེ།
⁵ སྐྱ་ཐོར་ལོག་ཕྱར་ལ་ཤད།
⁶ དུང་གོར་མོ་རྒྱབ་ལ་བཏགས།
⁷ ཨ་ཞང་འཁོར་བརྒྱས་གཞུག་ནས་བསྐྱལ།
⁸ མིང་པོ་ཆེ་བས་གཡས་ནས་བསྐྱོར།
⁹ མིང་པོ་ཆུང་བས་གཡོན་ནས་བསྐྱོར།
¹⁰ གཉེན་ཚང་ལྟན་རྒྱས་མདུན་ནས་བསུས་ཏེ།
¹¹ གཉེན་ཚང་གི་སྒྲིའི་ཡ་ཐེམ་མགོས་ཁྱུར།
¹² མར་བཞག་རྩོག་པས་མནན་ནས།
¹³ སྒོ་ཁར་བུད་ནས་གོ་ཁར་བཟང་པས།
¹⁴ སྤང་པའི་བསུ་ཆེན་དེ་རིང་གྲུབ་པོ།

ya

- ¹ da nangs nam mkha' gsal pa'i dus
- ² ma sru mang po lhan du 'dzoms te
- ³ pha bzang bu mo'i g.yas skra g.yas la shad
- ⁴ g.yon skra g.yon la shad de
- ⁵ shra thor log thur la shad
- ⁶ dung gor mo rgyab la btags
- ⁷ A zhang 'khor brgyas gzhug nas bskyal
- ⁸ ming po che bas g.yas nas bskyor
- ⁹ ming po chung bas g.yon nas bskyor
- ¹⁰ gnyen tshang lhan rgyas mdun nas bsus te
- ¹¹ gnyen tshang gi sgo'i ya them mgos khur
- ¹² mar bzhag rdog pas mnan nas
- ¹³ sgo khar bud nas go khar bsdad pas
- ¹⁴ srid pa'i bzo chen de ring grub bo

Ya!

- ¹ At daybreak this morning,
- ² Many women congregated,
- ³ The well-lineaged girl's right-side hair was plaited
into the right side,
- ⁴ Her left-side hair was braided into her left side,
- ⁵ Her back hair was brushed down her back,
- ⁶ Her back was embellished with round silver,
- ⁷ Hundreds of *A zhang* escorted her from behind,
- ⁸ Her elder brother supported her at the right,
- ⁹ Her younger brother held her at the left,
- ¹⁰ Together, the groom's side welcomed her at the front,
- ¹¹ (They) passed into the groom's house with the door frame
overhead,
- ¹² (They) passed into the groom's house by stepping over the
threshold,
- ¹³ Went to the sitting-quarter having passed through the outer
gate,
- ¹⁴ The accomplishment of a great welcome was done today.

ཡ།

¹ ཨ་ཁང་ཚང་གལ་སྤྱི་གུ་དུས།

² གཡས་གལ་ཉི་མ་ཤར་འདྲ།

³ གཡོན་གལ་སྒྲ་བ་ཆེས་འདྲ།

⁴ དབུས་གལ་སྟག་མོ་འབྱིང་འདྲ།

⁵ གོན་བའི་གོས་ཡག།

⁶ བཞུགས་བའི་སྟབས་མཛོས།

⁷ བཤད་བའི་གཏམ་བཟང་།

⁸ རྒྱངས་བའི་བླ་སྟན།

⁹ གཉེན་ཚང་གི་བསུ་སྟོལ་ལ་བསྟམས་ན།

¹⁰ བསུ་བའི་ཉམས་བཟང་།

¹¹ གུས་བའི་སྟོལ་ལེགས།

¹² ཟས་ལ་བཅུད་ཆེ།

¹³ ར་ལ་རོ་ལྡན།

¹⁴ ཉེན་འབྲེལ་ངང་གིས་འབྲིག།

¹⁵ བན་ཚུན་འདུན་མ་འབྲུབ།

ya

¹ A zhang tshang gral sgrig dus

² g.yas gral nyi ma shar 'dra

³ g.yon gral zla ba tshes 'dra

⁴ dbus gral stag mo 'gying 'dra

⁵ gon pa'i gos yag

⁶ bzhugs pa'i stabs mdzes

⁷ bshad pa'i gtam bzang

⁸ blangs ba'i glu snyan

⁹ gnyen tshang gi bsu srol la bltas na

¹⁰ bsu ba'i nyams bzang

¹¹ gus ba'i srol legs

¹² zas la bcud che

¹³ ja la ro ldan

¹⁴ rten 'brel ngang gis 'grig

¹⁵ phan tshun 'dun ma 'grub

Ya!

- ¹ As rows were made by the *A zhang*,
- ² The right row was like the rising sun,
- ³ The left row was similar to the waxing moon,
- ⁴ The center row resembled a proud tigress,
- ⁵ And the clothes worn were beautiful,
- ⁶ The ways of sitting were imposing,
- ⁷ The given orations were eloquent,
- ⁸ The sung songs were melodious,
- ⁹ Now see the groom's side's welcome,
- ¹⁰ The receiving manners were fine,
- ¹¹ The respected rules were good,
- ¹² The food was nutritious,
- ¹³ The tea was delicious,
- ¹⁴ Fortune was thereafter accomplished,
- ¹⁵ The wishes of the two sides were granted.

This speech praises the auspicious day and congratulates both the groom and bride's sides. It summarizes the marriage process from engagement to the wedding ritual.

After this speech, the *A zhang* are offered another meal that includes the same items as the first one, with the addition of Chinese cabbage, cucumber, celery, chilli, and potato dishes. Toward the end of the meal, an eloquent *A zhang* stands at the front of the row facing Uncle Bkra shis and Don 'grub's uncles and brothers and orates:³⁷

ཡ།
¹ ད་བྱ་མོ་བཙལ་དམ་ཞིག་བྱེད།
² བྱ་མོ་འདི་ད་ཅང་ལོ་ན་ཆུང་།
³ རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཚད་མ་རིག།
⁴ ལྷག་གི་ཁྲིམ་པོ་མ་ལུར།

³⁷ 'brug mo skyid recorded this oration from Lcags thar rgyal in his home 20 February 2002 in Stag rig Village.

- ⁵ལག་ན་ལས་ཀྱི་མེད།
⁶ཁ་ལེན་བཅིལ་མི་ཤེས།
⁷དེང་ཕྱིན་ཆད་ཨ་ནེ་དང་སྟོང་མོ་གཉིས་ཀས།
⁸མ་རིག་ས་ནས་སྟོན་དཔོས།
⁹མ་གོ་ས་ནས་ཤོད་དཔོས།
¹⁰མ་ཤེས་ས་ནས་སྟོབས་དཔོས།
¹¹བྱ་མོ་རང་གིས་ཀྱང་།
¹²མཐུན་པའི་སེམས་བྱུངས།
¹³འཇམ་པའི་དག་སྟོས།
¹⁴གོ་མ་པ་ཡང་ལེན་དང་།
¹⁵ལག་པ་ལྟར་མོ་བྱས།
¹⁶སྟོས་སུ་གན་གྱི་གཉིས་ལ།
¹⁷སྟོན་པ་ཆོས་པ།
¹⁸འབྱུག་པ་དྲོན་མོ།
¹⁹ཇ་ལག་ཡས་དང་།
²⁰སྟན་ལག་ཡས་བྱ་རྒྱ་གལ་ཆེ།
²¹མག་པས་ཀྱང་དེ་རིང་པན་ཆད་དུ།
²²པ་མེད་ཀྱི་བྱ་མོར་ཅི་འགྲོ་དང་།
²³བྱལ་མའི་ཟངས་ཁ་གང་འགོ་བས་བྱས་མི་ཆོག།

ya

- ¹ da bu mo bcol dam zhig byed
² bu mo 'di da rung lo na chung
³ skyid kyi tshad ma rig
⁴ sdug gi khres po ma khur
⁵ lag na las ka med
⁶ kha len brtsi sgo mi shes
⁷ da phyin chad a ne dang snyid mo gnyis kas
⁸ ma rig sa nas ston dgos
⁹ ma go sa nas shod dgos
¹⁰ ma shes sa nas slobd dgos
¹¹ bu mo rang gis kyang
¹² mthun pa'i sems zungs
¹³ 'jam pa'i ngag smos
¹⁴ gom pa yang len dang

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¹⁵ lag pa myur mo byos
¹⁶ sgos su rgan rgon gnyis la
¹⁷ rlon pa tshos pa
¹⁸ 'khyag pa dron mo
¹⁹ ja lag yas dang
²⁰ stan lag yas bya rgyu gal che
²¹ mag pas kyang de ring phan chad du
²² pha med kyi bu mor ci 'gro dang
²³ rul ma'i zangs kha gang 'gebs byas mi chog go

Ya!

¹ Now let's entrust the girl to the groom's home,
² The girl is still young,
³ She has not seen the scenery of happiness,
⁴ She has not carried the burden of misfortune,
⁵ She is not used to working with her hands,
⁶ She is ignorant of etiquette,
⁷ From now on, both the mother and sisters-in-law,
⁸ Show the girl when she doesn't see,
⁹ Tell the girl when she doesn't hear,
¹⁰ Teach the girl when she doesn't know,
¹¹ To the girl herself,
¹² Be agreeable,
¹³ Be soft-spoken,
¹⁴ Quicken your steps,
¹⁵ Busy your hands,
¹⁶ Especially for the parents-in-law
¹⁷ Cook whatever is raw,
¹⁸ And heat whatever is cold
¹⁹ Offer tea with one hand,
²⁰ Prepare seats with felt unfolded with the other is important,
²¹ To the groom himself from today on,

²² The act of doing whatever you wish to a fatherless girl,³⁸

²³ And leaving a pot uncovered is not permitted.³⁹

ཡ།

¹ མཐའ་མར་ཁ་གཡང་ཞིག་བོས་ན།

² རྒྱལ་བོའི་རྒྱལ་སྲིད་བརྟན་པ་དང་།

³ བྱིས་ལ་བདེ་སྲིད་འཛོམ་པར་ཤོག།

⁴ གནམ་ལ་ཆར་ཁུ་འབབ་པ་དང་།

⁵ ས་ལ་ལོ་ཕྱགས་འཕེལ་བར་ཤོག།

⁶ ཆུ་ན་པའི་སླ་ཆོ་བརྟན་པ་དང་།

⁷ གཞོན་པར་ན་ཆ་མེད་པར་ཤོག།

⁸ རྩོམ་རྩོམ་གྱིས་བཀའ་བ་དང་།

⁹ འབྲུ་མཛོད་འབྲུ་ཡིས་གཏམས་པར་ཤོག།

¹⁰ བྱ་རབས་ཆ་རྒྱད་འཕེལ་བ་དང་།

¹¹ ཅི་བསམ་ཡིད་བཞིན་འབྲུབ་པར་ཤོག།

ya

¹ mtha mar kha g.yang zhig bos na

² rgyal bo'i rgyal srid brtan pa dang

³ khyim la bde skyid 'dzom par shog

⁴ gnam la char chu 'bab pa dang

⁵ sa la lo phyugs 'phel bar shog

⁶ rgan pa'i sku tshe brtan pa dang

⁷ gzhon par na tsha med par shog

⁸ nor rwa nor gyis bkang ba dang

³⁸ This suggests that the groom may have done something improper in the past to a girl who had no male relatives to protect her, but this is not the case with the bride who has a father and brothers to protect her. It warns the groom against mistreating his bride.

³⁹ This suggests that a lazy woman does not care if the pots are covered when she cooks. However, this bride is not from a lazy family and therefore, the groom cannot mistreat his bride on the grounds that she is lazy.

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⁹ 'bru mdzod 'bru yis gtams par shog

¹⁰ bu rabs tsha rgyud 'phel ba dang

¹¹ ci bsam yid bzhin 'grub par shog

Ya!

¹ To make a final benediction:

² May the king's sovereignty be sustained!

³ May this family be endowed with happiness!

⁴ May there be much rain!

⁵ May livestock and crops flourish!

⁶ May the elders be endowed with longevity!

⁷ May the young ones be free from illness!

⁸ May the stable be completely full of yaks!

⁹ May the barn be full of grain!

¹⁰ May the line of family descent continue!

¹¹ May all wishes be fulfilled!

At about sunset, the *A zhang* and Me tog have one last meal and leave. The guests and the groom's side gather and sing. At this time, Lha mo may leave the bedroom and join the activities. After guests leave, Lha mo and Don 'grub's family have a big meal. That night, the new couple sleep together.

The next day, Uncle Bsod nams' family invites the new couple to their home and they spend a night there. When they return, several hundred RMB, is returned by Uncle Bsod nams.

A Groom Comes to Live in the Bride's Home

At times, grooms live with their wives in their wives' homes. In 2004, however, this was increasingly rare. It might have occurred if the family had only daughters. Boys who married

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into their wives' homes were usually from families with several sons, and their parents were unable to find wives for them all. The process of marrying into the bride's home was similar to brides marrying into grooms' homes, but no grooms eloped to their wives' homes, because it was nearly always an arranged marriage. There was not much 'dowry' for the groom, but after the groom married into the bride's home, he gradually became master of the family. Men who married into their wives' homes were usually denigrated.

DIVORCE

Historically, divorce has been rare in Stag rig Village but since about 1995, it has become increasingly common. Couples may find they have nothing in common. A spouse might also find a lover. When the couple divorces, the wife takes all her clothes back to her parents' home. Some divorces occur one or two years after marriage, and the couple might not have children. If they do, the children often go with the mother, and the father provides money and grain for the children. But if the children's father's side agrees to take the children, he only gives a small amount of money and grain to his wife as a token payment for her work at his home during the marriage. The couples do not go to court for divorce; instead they ask the matchmakers to be judges. Most divorced villagers remarry two or three years later.

APPENDIX ONE:
WEDDING EXPENSES, STAG RIG VILLAGE
11 FEBRUARY 2004⁴⁰

THE GROOM'S EXPENSES

Engagement.

Items	Quantity	Value RMB
cash		1,000
<i>gos</i> (silk cloth)	2	80
<i>ras</i> (cotton cloth)	1	50
<i>ther ma</i> (woven cloth for making Tibetan summer robes)	1	53
<i>kha btags</i> (white, blue, or yellow silk ceremonial scarves)	1	5
liquor	4 bottles	57
Total		1,245

Given after the bride's side agrees to the marriage.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
cash		1,500
liquor	7 bottles	49
cigarettes	10 cartons	20
beer	10 bottles	18
Total		1,587

⁴⁰ Chos Idan (b. 1938 in Stag rig Village) was interviewed at his home in Stag rig Village in February 2005.

Bridewealth.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
cash		2,000
<i>phrug</i> (thick woven cloth for making summer Tibetan robes)	1	360
<i>ha sag</i> (thin, cheap woven cloth)	1	95
<i>ther ma</i>	1	75
<i>gos</i>	3	150
<i>kha btags</i> (ceremonial silk scarves)	40	120
<i>rgya lwa</i> (Western-style clothing)	variable	280
Total		3,080

Banquet for the wedding ritual.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
<i>lug sha</i> (mutton)	5 sheep	1,750
<i>skam sha</i> (beef)	10 kg	160
<i>phag sha</i> (pork)	10 kg	130
liquor	20 bottles	300
cigarettes	5 cartons	100
<i>sngo tshod</i> (vegetables)	variable	100
<i>ka ra</i> (candy)	5 kg	50
<i>sil tog</i> (fruit)	25 kg	75
<i>shog bu'u/sbag</i> (firecrackers)	variable	100
<i>'bras</i> (rice)	25 kg	100
<i>rgun 'brum</i> (raisins)	3 kg	30
<i>gro ma</i> (wild baby yams)	1 kg	28
<i>mar</i> (butter)	5 kg	120
Total		3,043

THE BRIDE'S EXPENSES

Dowry.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
<i>tsha ru sram can</i> (otter-skin trimmed lambskin robe)	1	3,800
<i>phrug</i>	1	350
<i>bzos tshar</i> (artificial lambskin Tibetan robe)	1	150
<i>ha sag</i>	1	110
<i>nyal thub</i> (quilt)	1	60
<i>sngos shubs</i> (pillowcase)	2	10
<i>nyi zla</i> ⁴¹	1	900
<i>wa zhwa</i> (fox-fur hat)	1	130
<i>le'u mo</i>	1	35
<i>bod kyi stod lwa</i> (Tibetan shirt)	1	50
<i>rgya lwa</i>	10	1,000
<i>lham</i> (shoes)	10 pairs	300
Total		6,895

⁴¹ A moon-shaped silver ornament the bride wears on her chest.

Banquet for inviting the groom to the bride's home.

Item	Quantity	Value RMB
<i>ske rags</i> (sash)	26	390
<i>lug sha</i>	2 carcasses	500
<i>phag sha</i>	10 kg	130
<i>skam sha</i>	10 kg	160
liquor	10 bottles	100
cigarettes	10 packets	20
candy	3 kg	30
<i>sil tog</i>	10 kg	24
'bras	25 kg	100
<i>sngo tshod</i>	variable	50
<i>mar</i>	5 kg	120
Total		1,624

COMPARATIVE TOTALS

Side	Value RMB
bride's family	8,519
groom's family	8,955

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

A

A myes Brtan skyong ཨ་མེས་བརྟན་སྐྱོང་།

A zhang ཨ་ཇང་།

A zhang tshang bde mo yin nam ཨ་ཇང་ཚང་བདེ་མོ་ཡིན་ནམ།

B

bang skra བང་སྐྱལ་།

bzos tshar བཟོས་ཚར།

bde mo yin བདེ་མོ་ཡིན།

bkra shis བརྒྱ་ཤིས།

Bla brang ལྷ་བརང་།

Blo brtan rdo rje ལྷོ་བརྟན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

Blo bzang tshe ring ལྷོ་བཟང་ཚེ་རིང་།

Bod dar tshang བོད་དར་ཚང་།

bod kyi stod lwa བོད་ཀྱི་སྟོད་ལ།

'bras འབྲས།

'brug mo འབྲུག་མོ།

'brug mo skyid འབྲུག་མོ་སྐྱིད།

bsang བསང་།

Bsod nams བསོད་ནམས།

bu mo, khyod tshe ring bar smon ཐུ་མོ། ཁྱོད་ཚེ་རིང་བར་སྟོན།

C

Chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།

'cham འཆམ།

Changmu 常牧

Chos ldan ཆོས་ལྷན།

Chu bar ma རྩ་བར་མ།

D

Dar mtsho དར་མཚོ།

Dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu དབྱར་རྩ་དགུན་འབུ།

Dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།

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rgun 'brum རྒུན་འབྲུམ།
Don 'grub དོན་འགྲུབ།
dong chong xia cao 冬虫夏草
Donggou 东沟
dou rou 豆肉
Douhoulou 豆后漏
Dpa' mo དཔལ་འཕྱོ་
Dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ།
Dpon tshang དཔོན་ཅང་།
dui 队

E

er dui 二队

G

Garang 尕让
Gcan tsha གཅན་ཅཿ།
Ge lu tshang གེ་ལུ་ཅང་།
Gonghe 共和
gos གོས།
gro ma གྲོ་མ།
Grwa tsa tshang གྲཱ་ཅཿ་ཅང་།
gseb ri གསེབ་རི།
Gshin rje bdag po གཤིན་རྗེ་བདག་པོ།
Guide 贵德
Guinan 贵南
Guoluo 果洛
gyos sha gyos chang གྱོས་ཤ་གྱོས་ཅང་།

H

ha sag ཧ་སག།
Hainan 海南
lham ལམ།
Han 汉
Hedong 河东

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Hexi 河西

Heyin 河阴

hu tse ལུ་ཙེ།

Huangnan 黄南

Hui 回

J

Jianzha 尖扎

K

ka ra ཀ་ར།

Kab ron ཀ་བ་རོན།

kha btags ཁ་བ་ཏགས།

Khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།

Khro go ཁྲོ་གོ།

Khro rgyal ཁྲོ་རྒྱལ།

khyod la bde skyid kyi ma 'ongs ba zhig yod bar smon

ཁྱེད་ལ་བདེ་སྦྱིད་གྱི་མ་འོངས་བ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པར་སྟོན།

L

Lcags thar rgyal ལྷགས་ཐར་རྒྱལ།

le'u mo ལེ་ལུ་མོ།/ལོང་སྐད་དུ་བྱིང་ན།

Lha khang thang ལྷ་ཁང་ཐང་།

Lha mo ལྷ་མོ།

lo sar ལོ་སར།

lug sha ལུག་ཤ།

Luohantang 罗汉堂

M

ma yong མ་ཡོང་།

mag 'bod མག་འབོད།

Mang rdzong མང་རྫོང་།

Mao Zedong 毛泽东

mar མར།

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me tog མེ་ཏོག

Mgo log མགོ་ལོག

Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 果洛藏族自治州

Guoluo zangzu zizhi zhou

Mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ་

Mtsho lho Prefecture Normal School 海南州民师 Hainan

zhou minshi

Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན་

mu ཡུ་

N

mna' ma ma yong ngam མནའ་མ་མ་ཡོང་ངམ།

Nag phrug tshang ནག་ཕུག་ཚང་།

Nags tshang ནག་ས་ཚང་།

nyal thul ཉལ་ཐུལ་

nyi zla ཉི་ལྷ།

P

Pad ma པད་མ།

Pad skyid པད་སྒྱིད།

phag sha ཕག་ཤ།

Phrang mar ཕར་མར།

phrug ཕུག

phul tse ཕུལ་ཙེ།

Phun mo ཕུན་མོ།

Phyor tshang ཕྱོར་ཚང་།

Q

Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学 Qinghai shifan

daxue

Qinghai 青海

R

ral ba རལ་བ།

ras རས།

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Rdo rje འོ་རྟེ།
Re tshang རེ་མང།
Renminbi (RMB) 人民币
rgya lwa རྟལ་ལྷ།
Rgyab ri རྟལ་རི།
Rgyal bo རྟལ་བོ།
rgyal po རྟལ་པོ།
Rgyal bo tshang རྟལ་བོ་མང།
Rgyal mo tshang རྟལ་མོ་མང།
Rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།
Rnye རྟེ།
Rnye tshang རྟེ་མང།
rtsam pa རུ་ས་པ།
Ru sar tshang རུ་ས་ར་མང།
rus pa རུ་ས་པ།

S

san dui སང་དུམ་གྲུབ།
Spyan ras gzhigs སྤྱུན་རས་གཟིགས།
sha ཤ།
Sha rgya lcin tshang ཤ་རྟལ་ལམ་མང།
Shar lung ཤར་ལུང།
Shar lung Township Boarding School 东沟乡寄宿学校
Donggou xiang jisu xuexiao
shog bu'u/sbag ཤོག་བུ་འུ་སྔག་
sil tog སིལ་ཏོག་
skam sha སྐམ་ཤ།
ske rags སྐེ་རགས།
skra 'phab སྐར་ཕམ།
sngo tshod སྔོ་ཚོད།
sngas shubs སྔས་ཤུབས།
Stag rig སྟག་རིག་
Stag rig tshang སྟག་རིག་མང།

T

ther ma ཐེར་མ།

This ba ཐེས་བ།

This ba tshang ཐེས་བ་ཚང་།

Thun te ཐུན་ཏེ།

the'u rang ཐེ་འུ་རང་།

Tongde ཏོང་ཏེ།

tsha ru sram can ཚ་རུ་སྐམ་ཅན་།

Tshe 'bum ཚེ་འབུམ།

Tshe dbang ཚེ་དབང་།

Tshe dpa' ཚེ་དཔའ།

tshe ring lo brgya yong bar smon ཚེ་རིང་ལོ་བརྟུ་ཡོང་བར་སྟོན།

Tu ཏུ (Monguor)

W

wa zhwa ས་ལྷ།

wenroude yanggao རྩལ་ལྡོག་ལྷོ་མ།

X

Xinghai རྩལ་མཐོ་མ།

Xining རྩལ་མོ་མ།

Xinjie རྩལ་མོ་མ།

Y

yi dui ཡི་དུམ་མ།

Z

Zi ling རྩལ་ལོང་།

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